

Carnegie Corporation of New York

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Vartan Gregorian
President

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To the Friends and Supporters of the Lebanon Public Library:

I am deeply honored to have been asked to write to you in order to help celebrate the 100th anniversary of your Library, which was started with a \$10,000 grant from Andrew Carnegie and opened on January 1, 1908. The fact that more than two-thirds of your original Lebanon Town Council had resolved to establish a free and public library and reading room is testimony to the early—and enduring—commitment of your community to the spirit of learning. Mr. Carnegie would certainly have been moved—and proud! I understand that the building's front gable bears a stone decoration inscribed with the words "Carnegie's Gift," and the continued expansion of the library through the years is surely Lebanon's own gift to his memory. I was delighted, also, to be provided with a photograph of the extraordinarily beautiful art glass designed by a dedicated and talented local artist, Valerie Sherwood Rask, in honor of the centennial. It adds depth and enormous charm to this commemorative occasion.

Events such as this venerable anniversary of a Carnegie Library building serve an important purpose. In our hectic lives, they give us the excuse to pause and reflect, to appreciate our history and open our minds to the future. As one of our colleagues, Daniel Boorstin, the historian and former Librarian of Congress, once remarked, "To try to create the future without some knowledge of the past is like trying to plant cut flowers."

Libraries, old and new, are living testaments to the fact that human beings, who first scratched out the news of their existence on cave walls, who wrote down their thoughts on papyrus scrolls so that those who followed after them could benefit from what they had learned, still believe in the importance of collecting, sharing and preserving knowledge. Within their walls they contain not only the heritage of humanity, but also a record of our civilization -- indeed, they can probably help us understand how we *became* civilized, and if we spend enough time there, perhaps even teach us how to avoid taking the road back to chaos and conflict, as much as we sometimes seem to be trying to nudge ourselves in that direction.

In the presence of a library, one is humbled, thrilled, challenged, frightened, excited, delighted, and inspired. As Andrew Carnegie, himself, said, "It is from personal experience that I feel there is no human arrangement so powerful for good, there is no benefit that can be bestowed upon a community so great, as that which places within everyone's reach the treasures of the world which are stored up in books."

Thank you, friends and supporters of the Lebanon Public Library, for preserving your treasure house, for expanding and enriching it through the decades, and for dedicating an entire year to this celebration. Those of us who respect libraries and librarians greet and congratulate you all on this memorable event.

Long may the doors of learning and imagination of the Lebanon Public Library stay open wide!

Sincerely,

